

Record of Solitary Sandpiper in Zambia

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The Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* is a very rare vagrant to Africa from the Nearctic and, while researching this paper, we have only been able to uncover three previous Afrotropical records, none of which is entirely satisfactory.

The first is of a bird collected in Cabinda, Angola. Describing the specimen under the name *Tringa chloropygius*, Bocage¹ compares it with a Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, noting its smaller size, proportionately shorter tarsi, distinctive colour of the upper-tail coverts, colour of the back and the broader, less numerous brown bars on the tail. No date or precise locality are given. Chapin² refers to the specimen and mentions the care with which Bocage¹ had identified it. However, most other workers, including Seebohm³, Reichenow⁴, Sclater⁵, Traylor⁶, Pinto⁷, Urban et al.⁸ and Dowsett and Forbes-Watson⁹, have ignored the record or considered it unsubstantiated, presumably having decided, rightly or wrongly, that there is something unsatisfactory about it. For example, Bocage¹ does not state what colour the upper tail coverts were, nor even that they were concolorous with the back. The specimen almost certainly no longer exists for re-examination as the Museu Bocage, where it is likely to have been housed, was destroyed by fire in 1975.

The second record is of a bird seen at Tok municipal dams near the Klip River, south of Johannesburg in South Africa on 26 August 1979 by Kieser¹⁰. In the absence of photos and/or measurements, he states that this sight record remains unsubstantiated. His field notes refer to a prominent eye-ring and dark rump - characteristics of the Solitary Sandpiper - and the sighting is given in Hayman et al¹¹. However, the record has been rejected by the Southern African Ornithological Society rarities committee (A J Tree *in litt*).

The third record is given by a worker from the Nearctic. Carroll¹² merely allocates record(s) of the Solitary Sandpiper to the Haute Sangha Prefecture of south-western Central African Republic. No details of abundance, status or habitat or any indication of dates or numbers are given. Without supporting details, this record is impossible to judge and is rejected by Dowsett and Forbes-Watson⁹.

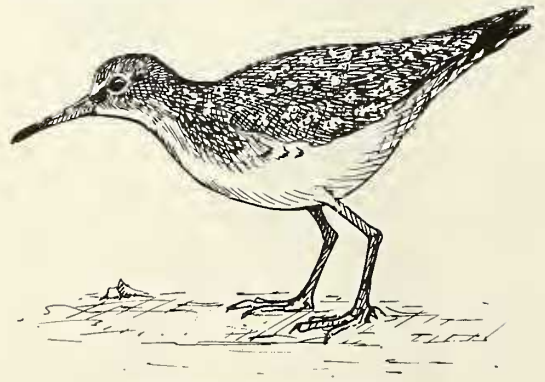
In the South Atlantic, the Solitary Sandpiper is listed as a vagrant to Tristan da Cunha by Dowsett and Forbes-Watson⁹.

On 23 January 1994, JPM identified a Solitary

Sandpiper at Lilayi Lodge (15°33'S, 28°20'E, 1,280 m altitude), 15 km SSE of Lusaka in Zambia. It was also seen by DA, photographed by JPM, and tape-recorded by RS. The bird frequented two man-made pools about 300 m apart, where both Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* and Wood Sandpiper were present for comparison. Both pools were overhung in places by trees.

The following description was taken: generally similar to Wood and Green Sandpipers, but differing by lacking the white rump, larger and less spotted above than Wood Sandpiper, whilst distinctly smaller than Green Sandpiper. Stance with tail held tipped up and constantly bobbed. Head pale olive brown. Supercilium white, extending in front of eye only, meeting as a V-shaped point at the front of the head. Eye-ring conspicuously white. Dark stripe from front of eye to base of bill. Mantle, rump and wings olive green/brown, darkest at wing shoulder with pale spotting in three lines across wing and spotting along edge of primaries. All spots small, faint and off-white. Three or four incipient bars sometimes visible on flanks below folded wing.

Tail: white outer feathers with four or five dark bars visible under folded wing tips, the dark bars narrower than the white ones. Central tail feathers dark bronze or dark olive green. White in outer tail conspicuous in flight. Wing tips extending 1-2 cm beyond white tip of the tail. Chin buff white. Pectoral patches greyish buff with a green wash not meeting in the middle, a faint patch of greyish streaking on the side of neck and greyish streaks on white in centre of breast. Dark spots on undertail coverts, but not easily seen. Underparts otherwise completely white.



Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*
By Mark Andrews

Underwings dark, plain olive grey-brown, not so dark as in Green Sandpiper. Bill with olive-green base, remainder blackish to dark brown, very slightly decurved. Legs pale olive-green with yellowish tinge.

Eye dark.

While feeding the bird was usually silent, but on becoming anxious at the approach of people it uttered a repeated *tip*. As it flew, it sometimes uttered a double note *teep teep*. These vocalisations were quite different from those of the accompanying Wood or Green Sandpiper.

In addition, the following points of behaviour were noted. At times the bird fed voraciously. Once it consumed a small fish and on four occasions it caught small frogs, but swallowed them on only two of the occasions. Before taking flight it sometimes raised its wings like an African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus*. On being disturbed it either flew to the other end of the dam or towered up, calling and flew out of sight. Despite disturbance it was remarkably faithful to this particular dam, returning in as little as 30 minutes, and was also confiding. When disturbed on 17 February 1994, a Green Sandpiper which was also present first flew to the other end of the dam and on being approached again flew off silently, towering into the sky. The Solitary Sandpiper, on the other hand, made short flights to the other side of the dam, bobbed and called repeatedly but did not fly away, even after being put up several times. Likewise, on 27 February 1994, the Solitary Sandpiper walked the length of the shore opposite five quiet but unconcealed observers.

The presence of this bird for over a month represents the first record of Solitary Sandpiper for Zambia, and possibly the only well-substantiated one for the Afrotropical region.

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Cinnamon Bittern *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus* in Seychelles, first for the Afro-Malagasy Region

Rob Lucking

At 11.30 hr on 8 October 1994 whilst walking back to the BirdLife International project house on Fregate Island, Seychelles, I flushed a small heron from the grassy path leading up to the Bamboo River on the island's main plateau. Although the bird was only seen briefly in flight before disappearing into thick bamboo, the rufous brown flight feathers

concolourous with the wing coverts, mantle and tail were distinctive. The bird was obviously not either of the two small herons resident in Seychelles, Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis* and Green-backed Heron *Butorides striatus*. The only species that came immediately to mind was Cinnamon Bittern, a species with which I was familiar from a trip to Indonesia in 1991.